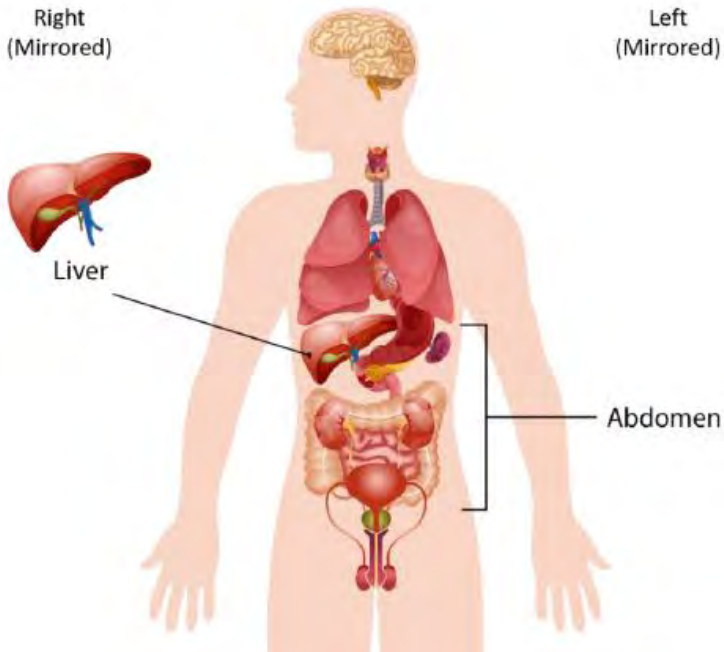


Department of
Gastroenterology & Hepatology

Liver Cirrhosis and Advanced Care Planning (ACP)



What is the Function of the Liver?



The liver is one of the largest organs in the body and it is located on the right side of the abdomen.

The liver has many important functions such as:

- Making substances like **proteins** which are needed for the body to function properly
- Producing a fluid called **bile** which helps with the digestion/break down of food
- Clearing the body of toxins and poisonous substances
- Acting as a storage place for sugar and vitamins to be used later on

What is Liver Cirrhosis?

Cirrhosis occurs when there is **continuous damage to the liver**, which results in healthy liver cells and tissues being replaced by scar tissue. This damage usually takes place over many years. Common causes of cirrhosis include:

- **Hepatitis B and C** (viral infection of the liver)
- **Overconsumption of alcohol**
- **Fatty liver disease** (build-up of fat in the liver)

What are the Symptoms of Cirrhosis?

Patients may not show any signs or symptoms during the early stages of cirrhosis. This is known as "**compensated cirrhosis**" and it may continue for many years.

When the liver gets more injured over time, its normal functions become more inefficient. In such cases, **portal hypertension** may occur, which is when it becomes increasingly difficult for blood to flow through the liver.

Some symptoms of more advanced cirrhosis include:

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|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Loss of appetite and weight loss• Weakness in the body• Jaundice (yellowing of the skin or eyes)• Itching | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Blood in stools/faeces• Muscle cramps• Abdominal and lower limb swelling• Confusion |
|--|--|

What are the Complications of Cirrhosis?

- **Varices** (expanded blood vessels in your food pipe)
- **Ascites** (build-up of fluid in your abdomen)
- **Hepatic Encephalopathy** (confusion)
- **Liver Cancer**

What is Advanced Care Planning?

Advanced Care Planning (ACP) is the process of planning for your healthcare and personal care needs. It helps in:

- Identifying your **preferences for medical care** based on your **personal values, beliefs and goals of care**
- Guiding your doctors to make treatment decisions during a medical crisis

Why is ACP Important for Patients with Cirrhosis?

Over time, your liver function may decline, and it may also become difficult for you to communicate your preferences for medical care. Hence, ACP is important and may be performed early while you are still well.

ACP discussion with your doctor is encouraged at the earliest time in your disease course so that treatment decisions are made based on your preferences and in your best interests.

Misconceptions About ACP

1. ACP is not a death sentence by your doctor
 - ACP allows your doctor to understand your care preferences
 - Together, your doctor and you can discuss and decide the extent of medical treatment you prefer if you become too ill to communicate your wishes
2. ACP is not an Advanced Medical Directive (AMD) or a Lasting Power of Attorney (LPA)
 - An AMD allows you to make an instruction to refuse life-sustaining treatment when you are very ill (e.g. **Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR)** to restart your heart's pumping action; use of **Mechanical Ventilation** (ventilator) to assist in breathing)
 - An LPA allows you to appoint someone to look after your financial and/or personal welfare if you lose the ability to make decisions

Misconceptions About ACP

3. ACP is not legally binding
 - Unlike AMD or LPA, ACP does not involve a contract with specific rules or instructions that you must sign and follow
 - Your ACP will be reflected in the electronic medical records of all public hospitals once it is completed

4. ACP is not final once an ACP session is done
 - ACP is an ongoing discussion and can be amended upon request, especially when there is a change in your health condition
 - Please contact a Gastroenterology nurse if you wish to do an ACP session

How Should I Prepare for My ACP?

1. **Reflect on your past experiences and think about what brings meaning to your life:**
 - How have your past hospitalisations been? How was the most recent time you were sick? Was it an unpleasant experience that you do not wish to go through again?
 - What gives you meaning in life? What kind of 'quality of life' do you wish to have? This may be influenced by your personal values and beliefs, and hobbies or activities that you enjoy doing.
 - Note down your preferences.
2. **Take note of your medical considerations:**
 - Would you want to put on life-sustaining measures when your heart stops beating?
 - How would you want to be cared for when you are very ill?
 - How would you want to spend your last days?

How Should I Prepare for My ACP?

3. Choose your Nominated Healthcare Spokesperson (NHS)
 - Your NHS is someone whom you can trust to convey your care preferences in the event that you fall too ill to communicate. They can be your spouse, child or close friend.
 - As a NHS, he/she must be:
 - Willing to be a NHS
 - Able to discuss your preferences, values and goals
 - Able to follow and honour your preferences
 - Able to make decisions under stressful situations

4. Write down your care preferences (to be discussed during the ACP session)

Clinic 4B
TTSH Medical Centre, Level 4
Contact:
6357 7000 (Central Hotline)



Scan the QR Code with your smart phone
to access the information online or visit
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